I.   AMENDMENT

A.   In the Claims

Please amend the claims, and cancel claims 134-147, and 150-151 as follows:

Claims 1-15: Cancelled.

16. (Currently Amended)   A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first user and a second user over the Internet, the method comprising:

associating said first and second users with a first realm and a second realm respectively, each said realm being accessible via the Internet using a protocol characteristic to said realm, each said user getting access to the Internet via one of a respective first and second device, at least one of said first and second devices having a storage media storing the protocol characteristic of the other realm;

~~determining a current IP address of the second user;~~

establishing a connection between said first and second users using ~~said~~ a current IP address and said protocol characteristic <u>of said second user</u> as part of an instant messaging session; and

encrypting~~, as between the devices,~~ an instant message <u>sent between the devices</u> during the instant messaging session.

17. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 further including sending a message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user is online.

18. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 wherein said step of determining said current IP address comprises retrieving said address from an IM database.

19. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 further comprising sending a connection request from the first to the second device for establishing said instant message session.

20. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 19 further comprising generating a response to said connection request by said second device accepting said connection request.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 further comprising displaying a window on the screen of said first and second devices, said window indicating a list of active users.

Claims 23 - 102 (Cancelled)

103. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 22 further comprising displaying said window with a message area, said message area being used to indicate messages between said users.

104. (Cancelled)

105. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

106. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

107. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

108. (Currently Amended)   A method of conducting an instant messaging session, the method comprising:

establishing an instant messaging session over an Internet Protocol network between a first user device and a second user device, each of the said user devices corresponding correspond to a user name, each of the said user names correspond corresponding to a different realm, each of the said user devices having an Internet Protocol address in the realm corresponding to the user name; and

encrypting, as between the devices, communications sent between the devices in the instant messaging session.

109. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said the devices is a handheld computer.

110. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said the devices is a palmtop computer.

111. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said the devices is a WebTV device.

112. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first user device and a second user device over the Internet, the method comprising the steps of:

retrieving an instant messaging protocol suitable for communications with ~~said~~ the second user from a database accessible to the first user;

establishing a connection from ~~said~~ the first user device to ~~said~~ the second user device ~~using~~ with the suitable instant messaging protocol as part of the instant messaging session; and

encrypting an instant message communication between a the first user device and the second user device during the instant messaging session.

113. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first user device and a second user device over the Internet, the method comprising the steps of:

retrieving one of a plurality of instant messaging protocols~~, the one instant messaging protocol being~~ that is suitable for communications with ~~said~~ the second user device from a database accessible to ~~said~~ the first user device;

establishing a connection between the first user device and the second user device with the retrieved suitable instant messaging protocol;

encrypting an instant message communication between a the first user device and the second user device during an instant message session using the suitable instant messaging protocol; and

displaying an instant message from ~~said~~ the first user device to ~~said~~ the second user device using the suitable instant messaging protocol.

114. (Currently Amended)   An instant message communications ~~system~~ <u>apparatus</u> comprising:

a first user device connected to an Internet Protocol network, ~~said~~ <u>the</u> first user device associated with a first Internet Protocol address, a first user name, and a first realm;

a second user device connected to ~~said~~ <u>the</u> Internet Protocol network, ~~said~~ <u>the</u> second user device associated with a second Internet Protocol address, a second user name, and a second realm;

<u>a database storing realm protocols connected to at least one of the first user device and the second user device;</u>

<u>the first user device connected to the second user device with a suitable instant messaging protocol communicates an encrypted instant message between the first user device in the first realm and second user device in the second realm over the connection; and</u>

<u>a display screen of each of the first and second user devices displays the instant message.</u>

115. (Currently Amended)   The ~~system~~ <u>apparatus</u> of claim 114, <u>further comprising a server connected to at least one of the first user device and second user device.</u> ~~wherein at least one of said~~ <u>the</u> ~~devices is a handheld computer.~~

116. (Currently Amended)   The ~~system~~ <u>apparatus</u> of claim 114, wherein at least one of ~~said~~ <u>the</u> devices is a palmtop computer[[.]]<u>, a handheld computer, or a laptop computer.</u>

117. (Currently Amended)   The ~~system~~ <u>apparatus</u> of claim 114, wherein at least one of ~~said~~ <u>the</u> devices is a WebTV device.

118. (Currently Amended)   A method for communicating ~~receiving~~ an instant message, the method including:

transmitting an instant message from a first user device connected to an Internet Protocol network ~~and associated with,~~ the first user device associated with a first Internet Protocol address, a first user name, and a first realm;

receiving the ~~said~~ instant message at a second user device connected to the Internet Protocol network ~~and associated with,~~ the second user device associated with a second Internet Protocol address, a second user name, and a second realm; ~~wherein the instant message is encrypted as between the user devices~~ and

encrypting the instant message communications between a the first user device and the second user device

119. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of ~~said~~ the devices is a handheld computer.

120. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of ~~said~~ the devices is a palmtop computer.

121. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of ~~said~~ the devices is a WebTV device.

122. (Currently Amended)   The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 114, wherein the first user device associated with the first realm is connected to the second user device associated with the second realm wherein ~~said~~ the first realm ~~employs~~ includes a first protocol characteristic,

~~said~~ the second realm ~~employs~~ includes a second protocol characteristic, and wherein ~~said~~ the

first protocol characteristic is different form ~~said~~ the second protocol characteristic.

123. (Currently Amended)   The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 114, further comprises

~~including~~ ~~sending a message to~~ an IM database that receives a message indicating the

corresponding connected user device is online.

124. (Currently Amended)   The ~~system~~ apparatus of claim 114, further comprising

~~displaying~~ a window on the display screen of ~~said~~ the first and second user device, ~~said~~ the

window indicating a list of active connected user devices.

125. (Currently Amended)   ~~The method of claim 118 wherein said first realm has a~~

~~protocol and said second realm has a protocol, said protocols being different,~~ The method of

claim 108, wherein the realms comprise Internet service providers.

126. (Currently Amended)   ~~The method of claim 118 further including sending a~~

~~message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user device is online~~ The method of

claim 114, wherein the realms comprise Internet service providers.

127. (Currently Amended)   ~~The method of claim 118 further comprising displaying a~~

~~window on the screen of said first and second user devices, said window indicating a list of~~

~~active user devices~~ The method of claim 118, wherein the realms comprise Internet service

providers.

128. (Currently Amended)   ~~System for instant messaging, the system including:~~

a first Internet service provider;

a second Internet service provider;

a user name associated with the first Internet service provider, and

a second user name associated with the second Internet service provider;

wherein each said user name corresponds to a respective device enabled to conduct an instant messaging session over the Internet, said instant messaging session being encrypted as between the devices. The method of claim 16, wherein said connection between said first user device and said second user device is peer-to-peer.

129. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 128, wherein the devices are enabled by a prior communication of an encryption key. The method of claim 108, wherein the communication between the first and second user device is peer-to-peer.

130. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 128, wherein the instant messaging session is facilitated by forming a relay connection. The method of claim 112, wherein the communication between the first and second user is peer-to-peer.

131. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 128, wherein the instant messaging forming a peer-to-peer connection. The method of claim 113, wherein the communication between the first and second user is peer-to-peer.

132. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers comprises a portal instant messaging provider. The method of claim 114, wherein the first and second user devices are peer-to-peer connected.

133. (Currently Amended) ~~The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the~~ ~~Internet service providers comprises a general instant messaging provider.~~ The method of claim 118, wherein the wherein the communication between the first and second user is peer-to-peer.

134. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 129, wherein the instant messaging session is facilitated by forming a relay connection.~~

135. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 129, wherein the instant messaging forming a peer-to-peer connection.~~

136. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 129, wherein the Internet service providers comprise portal instant messaging providers.~~

137. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 129, wherein the Internet service providers comprise general instant messaging providers.~~

138. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.~~

139. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.~~

140. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.~~

141. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.~~

142. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.~~

143. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.~~

144. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 128, further including:~~

~~a third Internet service provider; and~~

~~a third user device associated with a user name at the third Internet service provider,~~

~~wherein the third user device participates in the instant messaging session, the session being encrypted as between the devices.~~

145. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 128, wherein the first device displays a friends list including the Internet service provider of the second user and a user name of the second user and the Internet service provider of the third user and the user name of the third user.~~

146. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 128, wherein the first user device retrieves an instant messaging protocol suitable for communications with said second user device from a database accessible to the first user device.~~

147. (Cancelled) ~~The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers provides Internet telephone service.~~

148. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 112, wherein said establishing a connection includes establishing a connection with an Internet service provider that provides Internet telephone service.

149. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16, wherein said realms comprise Internet service providers.

150. (Cancelled) ~~The method of claim 112, further including encrypting the instant messaging session, as between a user device of the first user and a user device of the second user.~~

151. (Cancelled) ~~The method of claim 113, further including encrypting the instant messaging session, as between a user device of the first user and a user device of the second user.~~